

Guiding the 4-H Club: Number 4

Your Importance as a Leader

The work of the 4-H Club opens many doors for young people. As a 4-H Club leader, you have an important job. You can help your club members set high ideals for themselves. You can help them find their goals—but never try to set the goals for them. You may counsel them, but do not try to manage them. You cannot make a person do what you want him to do. If you try to make boys or girls carry out your goals, you may warp their personalities.

Help the 4-H Club member find his goal, but do not set the goal for him

Your job is to teach, not to govern; to guide, not to control. Let young people take responsibility, and gradually reduce your control as they learn to make decisions for themselves. It is sometimes hard for leaders to "let go" and to give club members increasing freedom. But your work as a leader is to teach young people to manage themselves without you, so that they may learn to live as adults.

Ideas for this bulletin were drawn from a study of parent cooperation in 4-H Club work by Erna Ruth Wildermuth.

The Club Leader and the Parents

_ Wilma Beyer Heinzelman

Why Try to Interest Parents?

Although you may work well with club members, you will get better results if parents understand what you are doing and work with you in club activities. The child's attitude in the club is strongly influenced by the way his parents feel toward the club. By working with the parents as well as with the club, you as a leader can help the club member most effectively.

Help parents to understand club activities

Parent cooperation provides the foundation to support the activities of your club. The larger the number of parents who show interest in the club, the greater its freedom and range of activity. The more active parent interest is, the greater and more enduring will be the support for the club.

When Should a Leader Work with Parents?

It is important to build a foundation of parent interest early in the club year. It is easy for a leader to become so busy working with the club members and their activities that the parents are left out of the 4-H program. When parents see how well the club gets along without them, they will see no reason to lend their support.

Build parents' interest early

What is Parent Cooperation?

In a study of parent cooperation, leaders agreed that there were six ways in which parents can participate. They can:

- Encourage their children to do good 4-H project work.
- Give helpful supervision and instruction to their children in carrying out 4-H projects.

- 3. Tell neighbors and others in the community about 4-H Club work.
- 4. Make 4-H Club work a topic of family conversation.
- 5. Provide the money their children need to finance a club project.
- Attend community 4-H events, and provide transportation for 4-H Club members.

Parents can only learn about club work and become enthusiastic about it by sharing 4-H activities. They need to understand what is expected of their children as club members; to understand what is expected of them as 4-H members' parents; and to feel that they have an active part in the 4-H Club program.

What Methods May a Leader use to Interest Parents?

Leaders and mothers agree that the following methods can be successful in working with parents:

1. Special 4-H community meetings for parents.

Some clubs have a meeting for parents at the beginning of the club year to talk over the program, to suggest ways to improve the club, and to indicate ways in which parents can help.

The boys of a club may enjoy entertaining their fathers at a pancake-and-sausage supper. Girls' clubs may want to have a mother-and-daughter banquet, or a Mother's Day tea.

One or two parents may be on the program, explaining what they consider to be their responsibility in 4-H Club work. Other parents should have a chance to ask questions and discuss club work.

Two new leaders, who wanted to know the parents before the 4-H Club was organized, arranged with club members to have a covered-dish supper for the parents. The parents talked about the club and what each might do to make it better the coming year. In discussing an approaching foods training school with the 4-H Club agent, one of the leaders said, "Neither of us leaders can drive. But one of the mothers said she could help us out with her car any time. May we ask her to come with us to the training school?" Thus, these new leaders were already working more successfully because they knew the parents and knew how some of the parents might help with the club.

Parents will attend a special meeting if their children are enthusiastic about it. Arouse the interest of club members by letting them plan and prepare the special affair. Encourage them to make it a big event. In this way club members will become so excited over the activity that their parents will not want to miss it.

2. Programs on 4-H Club work.

Demonstrations and program features by 4-H Club members can be used at meetings of community organizations, such as church, County Extension Service, PTA, Grange, and the like.

3. Attendance of parents at county 4-H events.

Encourage parents to share 4-H activities, such as rallies, achievement days, fairs, and demonstration days; to do things with and for the club. In this way, 4-H will not take the child away from the home. Instead, the parents will bring 4-H into their home. One mother said she led a club because it brought her closer to her daughter.

If parents attend exhibits and see the work club members have done, their interest may be aroused. Some leaders also urge girls to take home samples of cooking they have done at meetings. After seeing what her daughter can do, the mother may let her cook at home.

A leader noted that after a mother saw a 4-H exhibit in a store window and at the fair, she let her daughter use the sewing machine.

4. Home visits.

Leaders often find that the best method to gain parents' cooperation is to visit club members' homes and talk with the parents. Mothers think it is helpful to have material that tells them what they are expected to do.

One leader visited each home before the club member selected his project. When asked if this didn't take too much time, she replied, "It saves me much time later on in the year."

Leaders frequently mention that some parents fail to provide materials or refuse to let the club member use equipment at home. Here are some typical comments reported by leaders: "How can I get this father to provide the materials his son needs in his garden project?" or "That mother will not let her daughter bake at home," or "The parents think the plans for improving their daughter's room are going to cost too much."

Planning with the parents and the club member during a home visit early in the year prepares him to select a suitable 4-H project. It helps parents to understand what equipment and materials are needed and what work needs to be done at home. The leader learns the parents' desires and standards for the youngster.

5. Club meetings held in different homes.

The parents in whose home the meeting is held take an active part in preparing for the meeting and are present for at least part of it. They are doing something for and with the club. They get acquainted with the leader and club members. They catch some of the spirit of 4-H Club work.

6. Telephone calls.

One leader reports that a telephone call to a club member who has been absent from a meeting often provides an opportunity to talk with the parent about the youngster's participation in the club.

There is no better way for the local club leader to obtain parent cooperation than by the "word-of-mouth" method. The informal visit to the club member's home, the chat with the parent at a social event in the community or at the country store—all provide opportunities for the leader to talk about 4-H Club work to parents.

How Can a Leader Help Parents Participate in 4-H Club Work?

The most active interest will come from parents whom you may help to take part in the club in some way, doing something for or with the club members. No one gets genuinely interested in any activity by sitting back passively with folded hands. Parents love their children and want to help them. They need you as a leader to help them see what they can do for the boys and girls in the club.

Be friendly to parents; respect their activities, capabilities, and limitations

Ask the parents how their youngster is getting along and show your interest in his progress. Invite parents to attend and share 4-H activities with their children.

Let the parent know you feel sure he wants to help. Find out how he is helping his son or daughter. Encourage him to choose and plan ahead what he will do to help both the youngster and the club. Point out the value of his arranging for his youngster to own the project. Respect his other responsibilities, and do not expect more than he is able to do.

Plan with each parent how be will share with the club some activity be does well and likes to do. His special contribution may be: helping transport club members, culling chickens, appreciating music, making a straight garden row, making a good buttonhole, cooking over a campfire, providing a meeting place for the club, planning a party, participating in a community activity, or any one of a hundred other things. The value is not in the large or unusual contribution but in the many small contributions that many parents share with the club.

A girls' club leader who could not sew invited two parents who sewed beautifully to be assistant leaders. The leader herself learned to sew along with the girls.

This sharing of parents' abilities supplements your own ability and provides varied and rich activities in your club. It also gives the parent the feeling of being important to the club. As he takes part and contributes to the club, he becomes more actively interested and sees other ways to help. In this way, each parent is developing in 4-H leadership. You are no longer the one leader of the club. You are more of a coordinator, encouraging and using in the club all the talents in your community. By working in this manner, you will be a much better 4-H leader than if you tried to give all the adult guidance yourself.

Encourage the parents to help with the club

Show parents that you appreciate their help. Express appreciation before the club for parents' help, and encourage the club members to thank them. Mention parents at community meetings and in newspaper stories. Tell the county 4-H Club agent what parents are doing to help your club.

MARCH 1957

A publication of the New York State College of Home Economics, a unit of the State University of New York, at Cornell University

Questions for Discussion

1. After projects are finished each year, the Handy Helpers 4-H Club arranges an exhibit as its one meeting for parents during the year. Is this the most effective time of year to enlist parent cooperation? What other methods would you suggest? (See page 4.)

2. Mary's mother works all the buttonholes for her so that Mary will have a prize-winning dress. What can a leader do about this situation? (See page 6.)

3. Jack's father says, "This club work is a lot of tomfoolery! Jack must work on the farm, and cannot waste his time running around with the 4-H Club." How can a leader help this father understand the values of 4-H Club work?

(See page 5.)

4. Mr. Smith, the leader of a new 4-H Club, says he cannot get the parents interested. What suggestions would you give him? (See page 4.)

5. Mrs. Jones, who leads a large mixed club, complains that she cannot get assistant leaders because the parents of her club members are too busy to help. How can she get assistant leaders? (See pages 6 and 7.)



Cooperative Extension Service, New York State College of Home Economics at Cornell University and the U. S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. In furtherance of Acts of Congress May 8, June 30, 1914. M. C. Bond, Director of Extension, Ithaca, New York.